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Coal Stove Cause of Hopkinton Fatal Fire

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Hopkinton Fire Chief Gary T. Daugherty Sr. announced preliminary findings of their joint investigation into the fatal fire at 21 Meserve Street point to a malfunctioning coal stove as the cause. The fire took the life of an adult male on November 2, 2008. Results are preliminary pending the medical examiners formal identification of the victim and determination of the cause of death.

Investigators believe the fire was most likely caused by a malfunctioning coal stove in the living room.

Chief Daugherty said, "This fire is truly tragic. Our investigation has found no evidence that there were working smoke alarms in the home. We know that working smoke alarms can double your chances of surviving a fire by giving you time to escape." He added, "This fire happened on the very weekend when the fire service was trying to encourage people when they changed their clocks to change the batteries in their smoke alarms."

Coan said, "The two fatal fires this weekend are extremely sad and both may have been related to heating. Heating is the second leading cause of home fires in Massachusetts. We are concerned that this winter will lead to a large number of heating caused fires and possible deaths and have launched a *Keep Warm, Keep Safe* campaign to help educate people to stay safe this winter." For information go online to www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe.

Coan said, "The fire deaths this weekend bring the annual total in Massachusetts to 37. Smoke alarms are your first line of defense, but it is important to have an escape plan with two ways out, clear pathways to the exits and a meeting place outside."

The fire was jointly investigated by the Hopkinton Fire Department, the Hopkinton Police Department, State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal and the Middlesex District Attorney's Office.

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